
BUILDING AN OPEN DATA CULTURE IN THE MENA REGION

OPEN DATA SEMINAR

19-20 October 2015, Training Centre of Caserta - Italy

Towards Open Data eco-systems in the MENA Region.

This Open Data Seminar, organised by MENA-OECD Governance Programme in collaboration with the OECD's Reform of the Public Sector Division, is part of the [OECD's Open Government Project](#), which supports countries to design and implement open government reforms in collaboration with their citizens and civil society. The seminar, which took place in the [International Training Centre of Caserta](#), assembled public officials from various ministries in Morocco, Lebanon and Tunisia, civil society representatives from Morocco.

[Open government data \(OGD\)](#) provides governments with new opportunities to deliver economic, social and good governance value. However, OGD requires that governments develop institutional frameworks and capacities to create dynamic OGD ecosystems that support data-driven innovation, while managing the risks associated with open data.

The seminar was the occasion to support the countries in developing and reinforcing their ongoing open data efforts, within the broader context of their Open Government agendas. Morocco and Tunisia, for example, have already established open data portals, yet associating the whole-of-government and ensuring value creation remain challenges. The seminar discussed various aspects to reinforce the impact of efforts situating these within the framework of the countries on-going open government and OGP commitments and within their respective Open Government Steering Committees, which can be a lever to promote open data throughout the whole of government and among civil society.



The seminar addressed the whole cycle of open data from why we have open data to data management and data literacy in the public sector, on which Marcus M. Dapp - Digital sustainable commons shared experiences from the city of Munich. Participants were able to learn how to create an open government data ecosystem and which issues to avoid from André Lapa, Open Data Project

Manager, Agency for Administrative Modernisation from Portugal. Kat Borlongan, co-founder of Five by Five and Flavia Marzano, Professor at Rome University, addressed the issues of engaging stakeholder, tailoring data to needs and creating value. The findings of the OECD survey on Open Data helped to share best practices in setting objectives for open data and putting in place a whole-of-government approach.

There is a general consensus that open data is a topic that MENA countries want to continue to push forward as they look for more open, participatory and innovative governance frameworks. Yet, MENA countries face challenges which include reticence on the sharing of data, difficulty differentiating between shareable and private data, ignorance of existing data assets, difficulty in identifying interlocutors, insufficient awareness of the interest and benefits of open government data and inability to account for returns on investment. At the same time, the seminar showed that there are positive experiences of various open data portals and initiatives that can be harnessed to use open data for social and economic value in the countries.



Applying the OECD Recommendation on Digital Government Strategies to the MENA Region



In the context of the **OECD Open Government project** and in line with the recommendations of the **MENA-OECD Working Group II on Open and Innovative Government**, the OECD will produce a new regional comparative report titled **“Benchmarking Digital Government Strategies in MENA Countries”**, which assesses the current e-government and ICTs policies and initiatives of MENA countries against the **OECD Recommendations on Digital Government Strategies**, adopted by the OECD Council on 15 July 2014. The event also provided the framework for a working session on digital government strategies in the MENA region, studying the case of Morocco, Tunisia and Lebanon. The draft questionnaire for data collection to support the elaboration of the regional comparative report was discussed in order to tailor the study to the needs and challenges of the region.

Next steps

The OECD will continue to provide capacity building in order to enshrine an open government and open data culture in the public sector and among civil society in the MENA region. The regional comparative report will be presented and discussed in the upcoming meeting of the Working Group II to provide hands-on recommendations to better harness digital government for inclusive growth.